WAR of KINGS

A devastating galactic war has broken out between the Kree Empire, ruled by Black Bolt and the Inhuman royal family, and the Shi'Ar Imperium, controlled by the despotic mutant Vulcan.

Vulcan saw an opportunity to annex the Kree Empire while it was in a state of upheaval. During the symbolic wedding of the Inhuman princess Crystal and Ronan the Accuser, Vulcan unleashed his Imperial Guard in a callous first strike, sending his war fleets to invade Kree space.

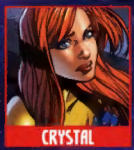
Reeling from this savage attack, in which many Kree colony worlds were annihilated by nega-bombs, the Inhumans realized they must overcome the Shi'Ar before any of their own schemes of destiny could be achieved.

The tides of war shifted dramatically when a rescue mission to save Lilandra, the exiled Shi'Ar empress, ended with Gladiator, praetor of the Imperial Guard, betraying his allegiances to Vulcan. With Lilandra restored to the throne, Vulcan could be overtaken, and the war ended quickly and positively.

This brave effort, so close to success, has ended in the worst possible way. Lilandra Neramani has been assassinated...

BLACK BOLT

MEDUSA


CRYSTAL

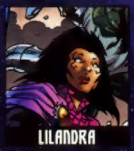
GORGON

KARNAK

TRITON

MAXIMUS

RONAN


LILANDRA

GLADIATOR

VULCAN

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WORD OF LILANDRA'S DEATH COMES TO US EARLY ON WHAT TURNS OUT TO BE THE LAST DAY OF THE KREE-SHI'AR WAR.
I AM NOT PRESENT WHEN KARNAK DELIVERS THE NEWS TO BLACK BOLT. I HEAR ABOUT IT LATER.
MAXIMUS FINDS ME AND SAYS, "CRYSTAL! CRYSTAL, HAVE YOU HEARD THE TERRIBLE THING?"
IT CUTS ME TO THE QUICK. LILANDRA WAS A TOWERING FIGURE. I ADMIRED HER DETERMINATION AND DEVOTION. HER LEADERSHIP AND STATECRAFT.
IN HER LIFE, SHE EMBODIED HOPE FOR PEACE. IN HER DEATH, SHE PRESAGES NOTHING BUT MORE DEATH...
...DEATH, AND THE GRINDING CONTINUATION OF A WAR NOBODY WANTS.

In RAGE and BLOOD and FIRE

DAN ABNETT & ANDY LANNING	PAUL PELLETIER	RICK MAGYAR	WIL QUINTANA	VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA	BRANDON PETERSON	MICHAEL HORWITZ	BILL ROSEMANN	JOE QUESADA	DAN BUCKLEY	ALAN FINE
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ATTILAN, THE ROYAL CITY OF THE INHUMANS.
MY KING?
LORD BLACK BOLT, DID YOU HEAR WHAT COUSIN KARNAK SAID?
THE STRATEGY CHAMPIONED BY HAVOK AND HIS STARJAMMERS HAS FAILED WRETCHEDLY.
THE KING HEARD HIM, GORGON...
...HE IS MUTE, NOT DEAF.
THE NERAMANI WOMAN'S DEATH IS A PITY. A PERIOD OF STATE MOURNING WILL BE OBSERVED.
RESPECTFUL OBSERVANCES ASIDE, MY QUEEN. LILANDRA NERAMANI'S MURDER REPRESENTS A TURNING POINT IN THIS WAR WITH THE SHI'AR.
LILANDRA WAS AN INSTRUMENT WE WERE USING TO BRING ABOUT A PREMATURE FINISH TO THIS CONFLICT. SHE MIGHT HAVE ENDED THIS WITHOUT FURTHER LOSS OF BLOOD.
THE FAILURE OF THE NERAMANI GAMBIT MEANS THAT WE WILL EITHER HAVE TO SEE THIS WAR OUT TO ITS EXHAUSTIVE CONCLUSION...
...OR SWITCH TO THE COUNTER PLAN.
UH!...WHAT COUNTER PLAN IS THIS, COUSIN?

THIS IS THE ROUTE WE DID NOT WANT TO WALK, MY HUSBAND. NOT YET.
THIS COULD BE AN ACT THE GALAXY MAY NEVER FORGIVE US FOR...
BLACK BOLT HAS SPOKEN. WE MUST END THIS WAR WITH THE SHI'AR AS QUICKLY AND FINALLY AS POSSIBLE.
THE INTERTWINED DESTINY OF THE KREE AND THE INHUMANS DEPENDS UPON IT.
WE WILL GO WITH THE COUNTER PLAN, AND TRUST THAT POSTERITY WILL COME TO ABSOLVE US.
I CONCUR, MEDUSA.
NO ONE SAID ANYTHING TO GORGON ABOUT ANY COUNTER PLAN...
"LIGHT ATTILAN'S ENGINES.
"THE CITY WILL LAUNCH."

I WASN'T THERE WHEN VULCAN LEARNED OF HER DEATH.
I CAN ONLY PRESUME HE WAS DELIGHTED.
HA HA HA HA!
OH, THAT'S... CHOICE.
THE IMPERIAL SHI'AR FLAGSHIP HAMMER II.
COME ON, KA'ARDUM! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU ALL?
SHE'S DEAD! SHE'S OUT OF MY FACE FOREVER!
I REMEMBER ALL THE TIMES HE SAID TO ME, "KALLARK, COULD YOU JUST KILL HER FOR ME? COULD YOU?"
THE NERAMANI'S DEATH CONSOLIDATES YOUR POSITION, MAJESTOR.
BUT I WISH YOU HAD REMEMBERED MY COUNSEL.
AND WHAT WAS THAT, ADMIRAL KA'ARDUM?
HER DEATH WILL TRIGGER CIVIL WAR IN THE IMPERIUM, SIR.
PRO-NERAMANI FACTIONS. PRO-VULCAN FACTIONS. ACCORDING TO THE INTELFEED, THE AERIE IS ALREADY ABLAZE.
WE CANNOT SURVIVE A WAR ON TWO FRONTS, EMPEROR.
NOT WHEN ONE OF OUR FOES IS OURSELF.
SO WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST I DO, ADMIRAL?
SUE FOR PEACE WITH THE INHUMANS AND THE KREE. IMMEDIATELY.
THEN SECURE YOUR CORE STRENGTH AGAINST THE NERAMANI DISSIDENTS.

STAY ON YOUR KNEES, KA'ARDUM. I'LL BE EXECUTING YOU THERE SHORTLY.
YOU, TALON, YOUR FRATERNITY OF RAPTORS PROMISED ME A GREAT DEAL.
WHICH WE PROVIDED, MAJESTOR. THE NERAMANI FEMALE IS SLAIN.
MY THRONE IS IMPERILLED AS A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE! YOU'RE RUINING MY EMPIRE!
IT'S NOT YOUR EMPIRE.
WHAT?
THE DATASONG EMPOWERS MY FRATERNITY WITH THE ABILITY TO DIVINE FUTURE OUTCOMES, TO PSYCHOHISTORICALLY PREDICT AND INFLUENCE THE PATTERN OF EVENTS ACROSS MILLENNIA.
IT IS HOW WE ADVANCE THE GREAT PURPOSE. IT IS HOW WE SHAPE AND STRENGTHEN THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM.
IT IS NOT YOUR EMPIRE.
YOU ARE MERELY THE CURRENT CUSTODIAN.
I AM EMPEROR VULCAN!
YOU ARE...FOR NOW.
I WILL GO DIRECTLY TO CHANDILAR AND DEFUSE THE CIVIL UNREST.
IF YOU WANT THE CONTINUED BACKING OF MY FRATERNITY, YOU WILL STAY HERE AND PREPARE TO DISENGAGE YOUR FORCES.
HELLO?! THERE'S A WAR GOING ON!
IT MUST END. AND YOU MUST PROVE TO US THAT YOU ARE A MAJESTOR WORTH SUPPORTING.
IF WE DEEM YOU UNVIABLE, WE WILL INVEST OUR EFFORTS IN AN ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATE.
YOU [redacted]! I'VE KILLED MEN FOR SAYING LESS!
THAT COULD WELL EXPLAIN THE TROUBLE YOU'RE IN.
"I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYONE SPEAK TO HIM THAT WAY, ADMIRAL."

NEITHER HAVE I, CAPTAIN.
THIS HAS JUST COME THROUGH THE INTELFEED. HE'LL HAVE TO SEE IT.
THE INHUMAN CITY ATTILAN HAS LAUNCHED FROM HALA AND IS IN TRANSIT TOWARDS SHI'AR SPACE.
WE MAY DRAW FROM THIS THAT THE INHUMANS MEAN TO STRIKE DIRECTLY AGAINST US. AN EHS'TYL ASSAULT TO END THE WAR JUST AS OURS BEGAN IT.
EHS'TYL. HNH. WHAT USE IS A DECAPITATION STRIKE IF IT DOESN'T TAKE OFF THE HEAD?
THE IMPERIAL GUARD BOTCHED THE RAID, AND THIS DRAWN-OUT BLOODSHED HAS BEEN THE CONSEQUENCE.
THEY SHOULD HAVE KILLED BLACK BOLT THEN AND THERE.
MY LORD, I PRESUME WE ARE TO HOLD STATION AS THE RAPTOR ADVISED?
IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE, ADMIRAL, IT TURNS OUT YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT YOURSELF.
I'LL SHOW YOU EHS'TYL! I'LL SHOW YOU A HEADSHOT!
MY LORD?
BRING THE FLEET AROUND! ENGAGE THE DRIVES! MOBILIZE THE GUARD!
FOLLOW ME IN!
BUT THE RAPTOR SAID TO HOLD POSITION, SIR!
WHAT ABOUT THE RAPTOR?

ATTILAN,
APPROACHING THE SHI'AR FRONTIER.
"GET OUT OF MY WAY!"
HNNGH!
WHY DID YOU SET GORGON TO KEEP US OUT OF THE INNER HALL? WHY HAS ATTILAN LAUNCHED?
MEDUSA? WHAT'S GOING ON? MAXIMUS TELLS ME THAT LILANDRA IS DEAD.
AND AS A RESULT WE HAVE SWITCHED TO OUR CONTINGENCY PLAN.
WHICH IS...?
OH, THAT WOULD BE THE ONE I BUILT FOR THE KING, CRYSTAL.
WHAT DID YOU BUILD? WHAT DID YOU BUILD, MAXIMUS?
I CALLED IT THE UTTERANCE OF DESTINY, BUT THEY NAMED IT THE T-BOMB.
BASICALLY, IT'S WEAPONIZED TERRIGEN...
GREAT RANDAC! TELL ME THIS IS NOT SO!
TERRIGEN IS A SACRED MUTAGEN THAT TRANSFORMS US AND MAKES US WHAT WE ARE! IT'S NOT A WEAPON!
THIS WAR MUST END. WE CANNOT BEGIN TO CRAFT OUR FUTURE UNTIL THE SHI'AR MENACE IS REMOVED.
IT WAS ALWAYS THE KING'S INTENTION TO ABOLISH THE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF CONFLICT IN THE COSMOS.
DIFFERENCE. GENETIC DIFFERENCE. SPECIES DIFFERENCE.
THE SYSTEMATIC UPLIFT OF ALL SPECIES THROUGH THE TERRIGEN PROCESS WILL RESULT IN UNIVERSAL PEACE.

IN A GALAXY WHERE EVERYONE IS AN INHUMAN, THERE WILL BE NO MORE LINES OF DIVISION.
AND YOU INTEND TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WITH A BOMB?
ORIGINALLY, THE KING INTENDED TO AFFECT THIS DESTINY SYSTEMATICALLY... OVER GENERATIONS.
BUT NOW THE SHI'AR FORCE US TO TAKE MORE DRASTIC ACTION.
TO, IN ONE STRIKE, END THIS WAR AND ALL OTHERS.
THE T-BOMB IS POWERED BY BLACK BOLT'S VOICE. ON DETONATION, IT WILL SET UP A SHOCKWAVE THAT WILL TRANSMIT THE UPLIFT EFFECT TO ALL--
NOT ALL. MY PEOPLE ARE NOT COMPATIBLE WITH YOUR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS.
YOU WILL UPLIFT THE ENTIRE COSMOS AND LEAVE THE KREE BEHIND.
WE WILL BE THE NEW UNDERCLASS. THE UNIVERSE'S ALPHA PRIMITIVES.
THE KREE QUESTION IS A PROBLEM, ACCUSER, BUT IT WILL BE RESOLVED EVENTUALLY.
OUR IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS--
OUR IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS SIMPLE! DO WE EVEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONTEMPLATE THIS?
IT GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING WE BELIEVE IN!
IT IS INHUMAN.
SISTER, YOU SHOULD LOOK THE WORD UP.
SINCE WHEN DID WE DARE DECIDE THE FATE OF ALL THINGS?
WHEN DID WE BEGIN TO PRESUME SO MUCH?

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CHANDILAR, THE SHI'AR THRONEWORLD.
THE OLD CITY BURNS. THE AERIE SHUDDERS.
THE SHI'AR TURN UPON THEMSELVES IN FEAR AND INDIGNATION AND FURY.
SOME FIGHT FOR VULCAN, OTHERS FOR LILANDRA'S GHOST.
OTHERS STILL FOR BOTH AND NEITHER.
I TURN LOSS INTO ACTION, LAMENT INTO RAGE
SHE IS GONE AND HOPE HAS GONE WITH

I TURN MY ANGER UPON THE OLD AND SECRET ORDER THAT HAS PULLED THE IMPERIUM'S STRINGS FOR SO LONG.
I TURN AGAINST THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE ARAKI SEQUENCE, ONE OF THE OLDEST AND NOBLEST OF THE GENETIC LINES.
I TURN AGAINST CHANCELLOR ARAKI. IN HIS CORRUPT WAY, HE IS MORE EVIL THAN THE MINDLESS HOOLIGAN VULCAN.
HIS DEATH COMMANDOS MURDERED LILANDRA.
PROTECT ME! BLACK CLOAK, YOU WILL PROTECT ME!
THAT MANIAC IS COMING FOR ME!
GLADIATOR, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS.
I DON'T SPEAK. I DON'T CARE WHAT THE COVERT OPS COMMANDER KNOWN AS BLACK CLOAK HAS TO SAY.

LET ME KILL YOU. YOU SHOULD DIE TODAY, KALLARK.
IT WOULD BE TOO CRUEL FOR YOU TO LIVE WITHOUT HER.
SKKKCH
HE WAS THE ONE...
HE MURDERED MY FAMILY.

NOT HIM, RACHEL. HE WAS SIMPLY FOLLOWING ORDERS.
IT WAS ARAKI WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER.
NO! SHARRA AND K'YTHRI, NOOO!
EEAAARRRRRH
HE KILLED MY FAMILY.
WHY DON'T I FEEL ANY BETTER?
BECAUSE TODAY'S ABOUT THE WORST WE'VE EVER KNOWN.
ALEX, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING BEFORE CHANDILAR DISINTEGRATES AND TAKES THE IMPERIUM WITH IT.
I KNOW, LORNA, I KNOW.
BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WHO COULD POSSIBLY STOP THIS NOW. THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WHO CAN BRING THE SHI'AR PEOPLE BACK FROM THE BRINK.
THE EMPEROR.
EXACTLY.
AND, UNFORTUNATELY, HIS NAME IS VULCAN AND HE'S INSANE.
THEN THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS.
IN RAGE AND BLOOD AND FIRE.

"...THE T-BOMB HAS LAUNCHED."
NO! HOW COULD HE BE SO--- NOOOO!
OH, SPARE ME YOUR OUTRAGE.
BLACK BOLT IS LEADING US INTO A FUTURE OF PEACE AND EQUALITY...
HE IS. HE SURELY IS.
SORT OF A SHAME HE WON'T BE THERE TO SEE IT, THOUGH.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, BECAUSE OF THE BOMB, OBVIOUSLY.
MAXIMUS! IN RANDAC'S NAME, WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
THE T-BOMB IS POWERED BY HIS VOICE! HE'S GOT TO BE THERE! ARE YOU DENSE OR SOMETHING?
HE'S GOING TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF.
THAT'S PREPOSTEROUS!
NO, IT WAS THE PLAN ALL ALONG. BLACK BOLT WAS FULLY PREPARED, IF IT CAME TO IT.
THIS IS HIS GIFT TO US!

NOO!
OPEN CHANNELS!
BLACK BOLT! HUSBAND! HEAR ME!
HUSBAND, PLEASE!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?
YOU EXPLAINED TO ME THE T-BOMB CONTINGENCY! YOU TOLD ME WHAT WAS AT STAKE! YOU SHARED THAT WITH ME!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME WHAT THE PRICE HAD TO BE?
BLACK BOLT?!
I CAN'T LOSE YOU AGAIN! I LOST YOU TO THE SKRULLS! I WAS MADE TO SHARE A BED WITH THAT FACSIMILE! I WAS WITHOUT YOU FOR SO LONG!
DON'T LEAVE ME AGAIN! DON'T YOU DARE LEAVE ME AGAIN!
BLACK BOLT!
ANSWER ME!

ATTENTION... ATTENTION...INCOMING CONTACT DETECTED. LAUNCHING DEFENSE SENTRIES...
SENTRY LAUNCH! SENTRY LAUNCH!
ATTENTION... ATTENTION.... SENTRIES NO LONGER RESPONDING...